

# Census Health Beat

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## NUTRITION

By Rose Diaz, RN

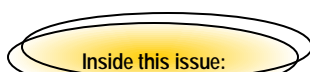
“Eat your vegetables so you will be strong and healthy.” We have all heard that at some point in our lives. But, somehow on this long road we call life, some of us have fallen off the proverbial wagon. Busy life styles have led us to fast food, and “Supersize it” has done just that to our waistlines and hips. How did it happen? Where did we go wrong, and what can we do about it?

Healthy eating does not just happen. It may require a little more planning than less healthy options, but it does not have to be hard. A quick review of the basics may be all we need to get back on track.



Just like any machine, our bodies use fuel to run. The kind of fuel we take in plays an important role in how efficiently our bodies work. We require more than 40 nutrients daily! In order to get the most out of our diet, we should choose from the five major food groups daily. The major five groups are: Breads, Cereals, Rice, Pasta; Fruits; Vegetables; Meats, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs, and Nuts; and Milk, Cheese, Yogurt and other calcium sources. A diet that includes foods from these groups each day provides essential protein, vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber. There is a *sixth group*: Fats, Oils, and Sweets are at the top of the “Food Pyramid” and should be used sparingly. This group is high in calories and low in vitamins and minerals.

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## THE ANSWER TO YOUR VISION PROBLEMS

By Jacqueline Thibodeaux, RN



LASER Assisted in Situ Keratomileusis or “LASIK”— could it be the answer to your vision problems? More than three million Americans who have undergone LASIK surgery in the past few years think so. Just imagine, you have worn glasses practically all your life but after only a few minutes in your ophthalmologist’s office, you emerge able to see things as you have never seen them before, and all without glasses or contacts. You have just had laser vision correction surgery.

LASIK is a short, painless surgical procedure that corrects focusing errors of the cornea. Many who have undergone the surgery have discarded their contacts and eyeglasses for better vision than dreamed possible. Some patients report vision correction of 20/40 or better.

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## Nutrition... (continued from page 1)

Because different foods provide different nutrients, eating a wide variety of foods from within each group insures that you will get everything you need to maintain a healthy body. Choose foods that are low in fat and sugars, and limit the total intake of fats, oils, sugars, and alcoholic beverages.

So, how much food do you need? Well, that depends on your age, gender, general physical condition, and your level of activity. It is a good idea to eat at least the minimum recommended number of servings from each group daily. If you are trying to lose weight, exercise is a much better choice than starvation in achieving that goal. Exercise will stimulate your body to burn the calories it is taking in. Going on “crash” diets where your intake is severely limited can actually work against you. Not enough calories causes your metabolism to slow in response to what it recognizes as starvation. In addition, failure to consume enough calories can actually cause you to lose muscle.

Why do we need so many nutrients? Each is responsible for a vital function.

**Carbohydrates**-Carbohydrates provide energy and heat. They are a necessary component in the DNA and RNA, the very essence of what makes each of us an individual. The simplest carbohydrate is glucose which is sugar. Carbohydrates are found in breads, cereals, rice, pasta, and potatoes.



**Protein**-Our bodies cannot manufacture proteins on their own. We must eat protein or the body will begin to break down muscle and other tissues. Proteins make up tissue and help repair the body. Dietary protein is found in foods like nuts, beans, wheat, dairy foods, eggs, fish, poultry, and meat.



**Vitamins**-Vitamins prevent many diseases like blindness and rickets. They are also effective in preventing many forms of cancers. It is important to eat a variety of foods so that we get the right combination of vitamins. Taken in excess, vitamins work against each other, so be cautious when taking large quantities of vitamins, especially fat soluble vitamins like A, D, E, and K, which are not excreted by the body and build up in the tissues.

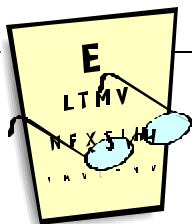
**Minerals**-Minerals are used in many bodily functions. Our skeleton system is made of several minerals. Calcium, one of the major minerals in the body, is needed for bone growth and strength. Fish, vegetables, grains, dairy products, eggs, and legumes are excellent sources of minerals.



**Lipids**-Lipids are fats and are a necessary component for health, but most American diets contain too much fat. Fats provide energy and help build tissues. Fats also store some vitamins and other nutrients. Too much fat can put you at risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and some cancers. Keep dietary fat intake to less than thirty percent and saturated fat to only ten percent of total fat. Fat provides nine calories per gram, compared with four calories per gram for carbohydrates and protein. So you can see that watching fat intake is an important part of weight control.

So, what is the best diet to lose weight? There is no hard and fast answer to that question, but fad diets are generally not considered the best way to lose weight and keep it off. While you may lose weight quickly at first, these diets often severely limit the kinds of foods you can eat, thereby limiting the nutrients your body needs. Many people tire quickly of this type of restricted diet and regain the lost weight. Research has shown that losing one half to two pounds a week by eating “better” and exercising is the best way to lose weight and keep it off. Making a conscious effort to improve your eating and exercise habits helps to develop a healthier lifestyle while you control your weight.

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## THE ANSWER TO YOUR VISION PROBLEMS ...*(continued from page 1)*

After a pre-surgical workup (thorough patient history, comprehensive eye examination, and extensive eye measurements), LASIK is performed on an outpatient basis in a clinic sitting. Most surgeries take approximately 15 minutes to perform. At the beginning of the procedure, a local anesthetic is put into the patient's eyes. The eyes are then propped open while the doctor shaves a flap-like opening in the cornea. The flap is held back with surgical instruments so the doctor can use a laser to reshape the cornea and correct vision errors. After the cornea is reshaped, the flap is released back into position to cover and seal the cornea. Many patients experience good vision immediately and can see well enough to resume their normal routines. However, it is important for patients to refrain from rubbing or irritating their eyes in any way for at least a week after surgery.

Individuals considering LASIK must meet certain criteria before being approved for surgery. Prospective patients should be at least 18 years of age (some doctors prefer 21 years of age) but may be as old as 60+ years. The average age of the LASIK patient is approximately 40. Patients considering LASIK surgery should have healthy eyes—no cataracts, glaucoma, infections, etc., and have mild to moderate myopia (nearsightedness), hyperopia (far sightedness), or astigmatism (blurred vision caused by an irregular shaped cornea).

Prospective patients who are slow healers, have any kind of autoimmune disease, serious illness, history of dry eyes (condition could worsen with surgery), or take medications such as steroids or drugs that suppress the immune system, are not good candidates for LASIK surgery. Chances are you will not be a good candidate for LASIK if you have experienced trauma to your eyes as a result of injury or illness. Prospective patients should know that some employers and selected careers prohibit LASIK. In addition, many insurance plans do not cover the surgery, which means that for some the cost for LASIK surgery may be prohibitive. Cost can range from as low as \$400 to as much as \$2,500 per eye.

Follow up after LASIK surgery is extremely important. The doctor will need to perform visual acuity and other examinations post surgery to ensure no complications develop and healing is progressing as anticipated.

LASIK is not a cure-all. Some patients find they still need to wear glasses at least part of the time. Others experience difficulty seeing at night; and still others report vision distortion of various kinds, such as blurring, dry eyes, glare, halos, scarring, or poorer vision after LASIK. Depending upon the outcome a second surgery may be required to achieve the best results or to correct problems associated with the initial surgery.

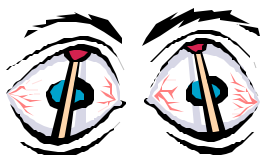


The surgery candidate should know the risks involved in having LASIK. If you are considering it, do your homework.

- Do some research on the Internet.
- Be sure to talk to at least two or three doctors before you make a commitment.
- Visit their offices. Look the facilities over.
- Sit in the waiting room and observe how the staff treats patients.
- Note whether the doctor takes the time to answer all your questions and makes you feel at ease.
- Do not leave your consultation until you have answers to **ALL** of your questions.
- Finally talk to someone who has had LASIK surgery and find out how satisfied he/she is with the results.

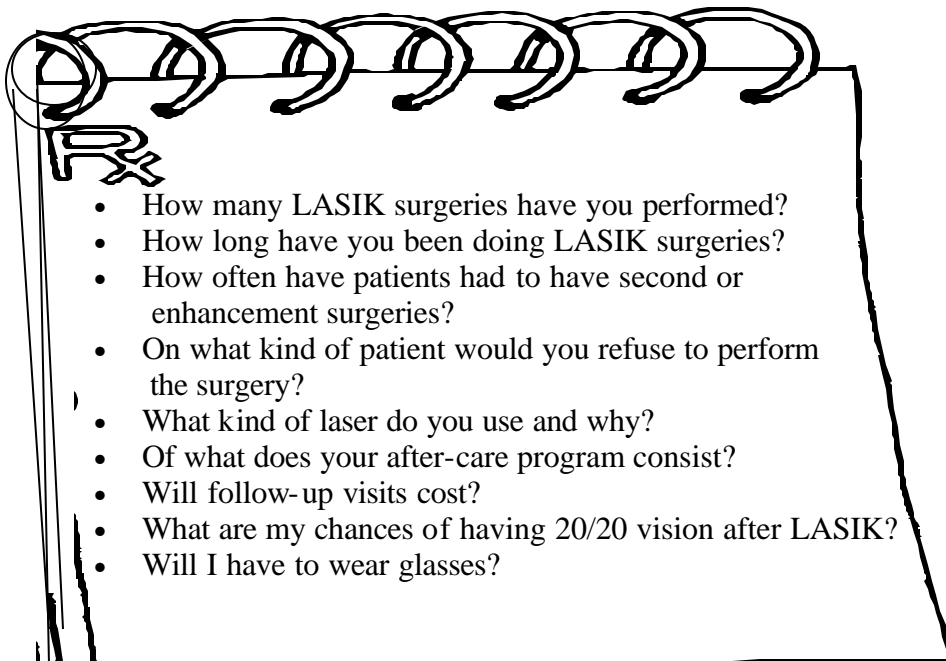
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## THE ANSWER TO YOUR VISION PROBLEMS



**LASIK has been a boon to many and a bust to some. You only have one pair of eyes. Get the facts before you get LASIK.**

### **-SOME QUESTIONS FOR THE DOCTOR-**



- How many LASIK surgeries have you performed?
- How long have you been doing LASIK surgeries?
- How often have patients had to have second or enhancement surgeries?
- On what kind of patient would you refuse to perform the surgery?
- What kind of laser do you use and why?
- Of what does your after-care program consist?
- Will follow-up visits cost?
- What are my chances of having 20/20 vision after LASIK?
- Will I have to wear glasses?

For further information on LASIK, visit these websites:

[www.fda.gov/cdrh/lasik/expect.htm](http://www.fda.gov/cdrh/lasik/expect.htm)  
[www.sightandhearing.org/news/sands/old/newsletterfall01.html](http://www.sightandhearing.org/news/sands/old/newsletterfall01.html)  
<http://isr.ijntb.net/genghis/LASIK/KNOWLEDGE.HTM>  
[www.2020eyesite.com](http://www.2020eyesite.com)  
[www.lasikinstitute.org](http://www.lasikinstitute.org)  
[www.surgicaleyes.com](http://www.surgicaleyes.com)



***Stop by the Health Unit (Room 1351, FB-3) and borrow a video on LASIK to view in your spare time.***

## Nutrition...*(continued from page 2)*

Let us talk about some food myths:

Myth...Certain foods like grapefruit and celery, or cabbage soup, can burn fat and make you lose weight.

Fact....No foods can burn fat. Some foods with caffeine may speed up your metabolism, but they do not cause weight loss.

Myth...Natural or herbal weight-loss products are safe and effective.

Fact....Products that claim to be “natural” or “herbal” are not necessarily safe. In fact, many of these products are not tested to prove that they are safe or that they work. Some herbal products may be unsafe to use with prescription drugs or may cause problems for people with certain medical conditions.

Myth...Red meat is bad for you

Fact....Red meat, chicken, pork, and fish all contain some saturated fat and cholesterol. They also contain protein, iron, and zinc which are important in maintaining good health. Lean meats in small amounts can be part of a healthy diet. Remember, a serving is two to three ounces of cooked meat, which is about the size of a deck of cards!

Myth...Starches are fattening and should be limited when trying to lose weight.

Fact....Breads, potatoes, pasta, rice, beans, sweet potatoes, beets, and carrots are rich in carbohydrates (starch). Starch is an important source of energy. Foods that are high in starch *can* be low in fat and calories. They become high in fat and calories when they are eaten in large amounts, or topped with rich sauces or butter. Better choices include whole grain breads, beans, and peas which are also high in fiber.

Myth...Fast foods are always an unhealthy choice.

Fact....Fast foods can be part of a healthy diet, *if* you make the right choices from the menu. Choose grilled foods instead of fried, and try a salad. Use only limited amounts of mayonnaise and salad dressing. If you really must have those fries once in a while, go ahead, but try to limit your portion size—share an order of fries with a friend!

Myth...Low fat or no fat means no calories.

Fact....Wrong! Most fruits and vegetables are naturally low in fat or calories, but other low-fat or non-fat foods may have a lot of calories. These foods often have extra sugar, flour, or starch thickeners to make them taste better. These ingredients can add calories. Low-fat or non-fat foods *are* usually lower in calories than the same size portion of the regular product. The number of calories depends on the amount of carbohydrate, protein, and fat in the food.



Read the labels! All the information you need to know about a food product is right there for you to see. Take time to shop wisely—we should be eating to live, not living to eat. That old saying “A moment on the lips, forever on the hips” does not have to be true. We all have a choice in what we put into our mouths—let us make it a healthy one.

For more information, check the following websites:

[www.nutrition.gov](http://www.nutrition.gov)

[www.nutrition.about.com](http://www.nutrition.about.com)

[www.nutri-facts.com](http://www.nutri-facts.com)

## JUNE HEALTH PROMOTION

**COLORECTAL SCREENING***Sponsored by the Health Unit***THURSDAY, JUNE 12, 2003****10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.****1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.*****Located in Room 1339, FB-3***

Colorectal cancer is the second leading  
cause of cancer deaths in the United States.  
Risk increases with age.



Come view a short film  
and pick up your  
screening kit!

**BLOOD DRIVE****Tuesday, July 22, 2003****Wednesday, July 23, 2003***Please call to schedule an appointment.*

*If you have any questions or would like to  
schedule an appointment, call the Health Unit on  
301 763-1673 or TTY 301 763-0350.*



## JULY HEALTH PROMOTION

**HEARING  
SCREENINGS***Sponsored by the Health Unit***Thursday, July 10, 2003****8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.****&****Thursday, July 17, 2003****8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.*****Located in the Health Unit******Room 1351, FB-3******By appointment only!***

If you have not had your hearing  
checked in the past two years, please  
call to schedule an appointment.  
*You may contact the Health Unit on  
301 763-1673, by TTY 301 763-0350.*

**Need to talk to someone?****Your Employee Assistance Program  
(EAP) is "just a phone call away."**

**Call 301 763-1681 or  
TTY 301 763-0350.**

**ON-GOING HEALTH PROMOTIONS****Room 1339, FB-3*****Body Fat Analysis*****Bi-Weekly 12 noon-12:30 p.m.*****Please call to schedule an appointment.******Cancer Support Group*****1st & 3rd Tuesday****12 noon-1:00 p.m.*****Stress Relaxation Classes*****Bi-Weekly 11:30 a.m.-12 noon*****Special Touch Classes*****Watch your e-mail for details.*****Please call to schedule an appointment.******New Mothers' Support Session*****Monthly 12 noon-1:00 p.m.*****No appointment necessary.******CPR Training*****Watch your e-mail for details.*****Ergonomic Assessments***

If you would like an ergonomic assessment of your workstation, please call the  
Health Unit on 301 763-1673 or TTY 301 763-0350 to schedule an appointment.

***For sign language interpret-  
ing services or other auxiliary  
aids contact Yvonne Moore at  
TTY 301 457-2540,  
voice mail on 301 763-2853,  
or by electronic mail at  
s.yvonne.moore@census.gov***

